

School Social Worker Crisis

The NASW-NYS chapter has recently been inundated by calls from school social workers across the state, who are facing potential job losses in the face of pending budget cuts. To date, impacted districts include:

Arlington Central District
Southern Cayuga Central District
Island Tree School District
Longwood Central District
Oysterbay E. Norwich District
Sachem Central School District

If you are a school social worker facing these or similar challenges as a result of the budget cuts and your school district is not listed above, please contact NASW-NYS chapter 1800-724-6279 ext 24 to speak with our Policy Research Associate, Brian Belz.

The following position statement has been released in the above noted school districts.

School social workers are at the forefront of school social, behavioral, and community issues, however in one school district, it has been proposed that guidance counselors will inherit the responsibilities that social workers carry. Distinct differences separate the roles and functions of the various pupil personnel service professionals. To think that one can do another's job is erroneous. In addition to being certified school employees, school social workers are licensed professionals with a scope of practice legally protected under article 154 of the New York State Education Law. Guidance counselors, licensed master social workers, and licensed clinical social workers have clear roles and responsibilities that can only be performed by the person qualified for each specific job. Below are the different professions and their responsibilities in the school setting.

The scope of practice of a **Licensed Masters Social Workers (LMSW)** with a school social work certification includes:

- Utilizing methods to prevent, assess, evaluate, formulate and implement a plan of action based on client needs and strengths,
- intervening to address mental, social, emotional, behavioral, developmental, and addictive disorders, conditions and disabilities, and of the psychosocial aspects of illness and injury experienced by individuals, couples, families, groups, communities, organizations, and society, and

- engaging in administration of tests and measures of psychosocial functioning, social work advocacy, case management, counseling, consultation, research, administration and management, and teaching.

The scope of practice of a **Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)** with a school social work certification encompasses the scope of practice of the LMSW and is also qualified for:

- diagnosis of mental, emotional, behavioral, addictive and developmental disorders and disabilities and of the psychosocial aspects of illness, injury, disability and impairment undertaken within a psychosocial framework;
- administration and interpretation of tests and measures of psychosocial functioning; development and implementation of appropriate assessment-based treatment plans; and
- the provision of crisis oriented psychotherapy and brief, short-term and long-term psychotherapy and psychotherapeutic treatment to individuals, couples, families and groups, habilitation, psychoanalysis and behavior therapy.

The practice of clinical social work is undertaken for the purpose of preventing, assessing, treating, ameliorating and resolving psychosocial dysfunction with the goal of maintaining and enhancing the mental, emotional, behavioral, and social functioning and well-being of individuals, couples, families, small groups, organizations, communities and society.

In contrast, the counselor's role is to connect students to educational experiences that promote academic, career, and social development. Primary tasks of a guidance counselor include scheduling, evaluation, and addressing academic concerns. Guidance counselors direct students in an academic, career and social/personal growth capacity. They do not have a legal scope of practice that encompasses counseling services. Other pupil personnel service professionals such as school psychologists are mandated for Special Education and IEP testing. Testing is a time consuming function of the school psychologists, and restricts their ability to take on a stronger role in assuming counseling related tasks, formerly performed by the school social workers.